



Name: _____

What Does it Mean to be American?

Project Rationale and Objective

- American National Identity is a difficult concept to explain because it has changed across time periods and does not have the same meaning to everyone in the same time period.
- The objective of this project is to explore more deeply one possible answer to the question “What it means to be American?” in one historical period to better understand modern conceptions of American National Identity.
- The answers you come up with may bolster the current understanding of what it means to be American, or it may challenge accepted notions. What matters is that you create an argument based on historical evidence and is thoroughly researched.

Open-ended Project

- In an 8-12 minute presentation, video, podcast, report, you will answer the question of what it means to be American through a particular period in history.
- You are able to answer the question in any way you believe it should be answered, though it is encouraged that you use the experience of one person, or event to state your case.
 - The question and project is open-ended by design, but you will need to provide a historically defensible claim and establish a line of reasoning.
 - You should tie this to a current understanding of what it means to be American. You can make a case that our current understanding is shaped by history or that the history suggests a wider or narrow answer to the question.
- You will be in a group of five, though only one person in the group will make a presentation each unit. Your group will help give you feedback and help as research assistants on days in which you work on the project in class.
- Project Research
 - You will have to make one source from the AP optional source list central to your presentation.
 - You will have to use at least ONE secondary source that is NOT your textbook, in the optional source list, or an encyclopedia.
 - Prior to your presentation you will have to turn in an annotated bibliography as a project checkpoint.
- Presentations in class will be followed up by questions from other students and the teacher on the content and research process of the project. Responses to both sets of questions will be considered in the final grading rubric.

Group Work

- Brainstorm session
 - The first gathering with your group, you will have a brainstorming session in which you discuss the various directions you can go with your project. The main goal is to produce at least three viable project ideas. (45 minutes)
- Pitch session



- After the brainstorm session you will create a plan for research for at least TWO of the ideas from the previous session. You will present your idea for what the project will look like for each. You will have to include more information to help your group give you feedback on which option is worth pursuing. You will create an annotated bibliography for each pitch, in which AT THE VERY LEAST you must include: the format of the project, the rationale for choosing the topic, one historical document from the list that is relevant to the topic, and one secondary source that will help in completing the project. (45 minutes max.)
- **Research session**
 - The research session will happen after everyone has chosen and submitted their topic. You can use this session to read through documents that are relevant to your topic or the secondary sources you've compiled. You will direct your group members to search for or read material that you've already compiled. They will have to report to you if it is relevant or useful to your project. By the end of the session you should have a complete annotated bibliography. (90 minutes)

Format Suggestions

- **Focus on Historical Figure**
 - Research one person in the period who had a major impact in history. Give background on their life and make connections as to how the things they did/experienced can help answer the question "What does it mean to be American?"
- **Focus on Historical Event**
 - Research a major historical event in the period, give the context of all the things that led up to the event and the impact it had. Explain how the event impacts the definition of what it means to be American.
- **Focus on a Historical Document**
 - Start by finding a historical document from the time period that intrigues you. One that prompts you to ask more questions, rather than answer your prior questions. Research the person/people who produced the document and their purpose for doing so. Analyze how the document is related to or answers the question "What does it mean to be American?"
- **Focus on an entire group of people**
 - Research a population group in the historical period. Explain how their experiences changed over the course of the historical period and how it answers the question "What does it mean to be American?"
- **Historical Domino Effect**
 - Start with one event from the time period that is seemingly unrelated to the question. Follow the impact of the event to the current understanding of what it means to be American.

Presenting

- The presentation of the completed project will be accompanied by a 10 minute question period that will be part of the project grade. Student peers will be allowed to ask one question to the presenter about the content of the topic. The presenter's ability to provide a competent answer backed by evidence will be required to achieve full points.
- Additionally, the teacher will ask one question from each of the following categories about the topic or research process of the project:
 - Reflection on the Research Process



- How did some preliminary information you gathered inform your research?
- What evidence did you gather that you didn't include? Why did you choose not to include it?
- How did your response to the prompt evolve as you moved through the research process?
- Did your research go in a different direction than you originally expected?
- What information did you need that you weren't able to find or locate?
- How did you approach and synthesize the differing perspectives in order to reach a conclusion?
- Extending Argumentation through effective questioning and inquiry
 - What additional questions emerged from your research? Why are these questions important?
 - What are the implications of your findings to your community?
 - How is your conclusion in conversation with the body of literature or other research sources you examined?
 - How did you use the conclusions or questions of others to advance your own research?
- A thoughtful and competent answer backed by evidence is required to achieve full points.

Using GenAI for your Project

- Personally UNACCEPTABLE uses of GenAI
 - Using it as a source (an academic source MUST have been produced by a person)
 - Using it to verbalize your argument for you (in full or in part)
 - Using it to substitute reading source material
- ACCEPTABLE uses of GenAI
 - Brainstorming ideas for topics.
 - Finding out background information on a specific topic to determine its viability.
 - Finding secondary sources that explain more about the topic.
 - Finding primary sources that are relevant to the topic.
 - Simplifying difficult text to gain meaning.
 - Proofreading your final work and suggesting edits to improve clarity.

Resources

- [College Board Sources list](#)
- Secondary Sources:
 - [Gilder Lehrman Secondary Sources](#)
 - scholar.google.com
 - [Library of Congress Digital Collections](#)
 - [Library of Congress Primary Source Sets](#)
 - [Founders Online](#)
- Primary Sources:
 - [Gilder Lehrman Primary Sources](#)
- Bibliography
 - [Library of Congress Guide to Citing Primary Sources](#)
 - [Purdue Owl Citation Guide](#)



Brainstorming Notes

Name:		
Group Members:		
Possible Research Idea	Initial Answer to the question	Possible Resources



Idea Pitch Outline (complete for at least two different ideas)

Name:		
Group Members:		
Research Topic:		Project Format:
Rationale for Topic:		
Source Title	Summary	Connection to Project
(Primary Source)		
(Secondary Source)		
(Optional Extra Source)		
Feedback from Group:		



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Feedback from Group:		



Research Log

[illegible]



Grading Rubric

	Criteria
Brainstorm, Pitch and Research Log, Annotated Bib	10 - Complete Brainstorm Notes, two complete Pitch outlines for different paths of study, Completed Reading Log, Annotated Bibliography
Context	10 - Project establishes broader historical context relevant to the topic of American National Identity
Historically Defensible Claim and Line of Reasoning	10 - Responds to the prompt with a historically defensible claim and establishes a line of reasoning.
Primary Source	10 - Project accurately describes the content of a relevant source from the College Board source list.
	10 - Project correctly uses a source from the College Board list to support the project's overall claim.
Secondary Source	10 - Project accurately describes the content of relevant secondary source that was independently researched.
	10 - Project correctly uses a secondary source to support the project's overall claim.
Use of Historical Thinking Skill	10 - Project employs any of the three historical thinking skills (causation, change and continuity over time, comparison) to expand on the relevance of the question, "what it means to be American?"
Oral Presentation Responses	20 - Competent and thoughtful answers to the questions from student peers and teacher on the content of the project and research process.

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